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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 001899

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: ISAF: CANADIAN DEFENSE MINISTER'S VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: OTTAWA 1654 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Brian Flora,
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Canadian Defense Minister John McCallum visited Kabul June 23-24 in advance of Canada's participation in ISAF IV and V. McCallum met with Afghan President Karzai and Defense Minister Khan, among others, and visited the camp being set up for approximately 1,800 Canadian troops. While mindful of the security risks, McCallum and Canadian MGEN Andrew Leslie, who will be ISAF's Deputy Commander, want to increase ISAF's visibility in Kabul and its interaction with the Afghan Government. They do not, however, believe it is feasible to expand ISAF's role beyond Kabul without a huge infusion of troops. Canada is also concerned that, with NATO taking on the leadership of ISAF, we not lose sight of the need for another key national contributor as Germany scales back its forces. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) McCallum's Executive Assistant Gene Lang and Director of Communications Randy Milik, both of whom accompanied McCallum to Kabul, debriefed us on the Minister's visit. Lang and Milik told us that Karzai was impressive, charismatic and optimistic about Afghanistan's future. Karzai reaffirmed that he was committed to meeting the June 2004 deadline for nationwide elections. UN Under Secretary Jean Arnaud, who also met with McCallum, was quite pessimistic about holding to the election timetable.

3. (C) Defense Minister Khan was more hospitable than expected, and appreciative of the Canadian contributions to OEF and ISAF. Lang and Milik said that Khan delivered a "well-rehearsed" message about his cooperation with Karzai. McCallum stressed reform of the military and disarmament/demobilization/reconstruction (DDR). Khan concurred that DDR was key, but said it was being delayed by lack of funding. Lang noted the huge disparity between Khan's militia, numbering approximately 70,000, and the 10,000 personnel that have been trained thus far for the Afghan Army.

4. (C) In a meeting at the Interior Ministry, McCallum also discussed the policing challenge in Kabul where, according to Milik, there are only 7,000 police with little training in a city of some 3 million. RCMP officers recently visited Kabul and decided against setting up a training program, but McCallum told his Afghan interlocutors that he would revisit this issue in Ottawa.

5. (C) MGEN Leslie, who joined McCallum for his meetings, wants to build stronger linkages between ISAF and the Afghan Government. While the German forces have done an excellent job overall, the Canadians believe ISAF can and should be more visible, and do more to advise and assist the Afghani Government, possibly including liaison officers. The Canadians are not, however, looking to expand the ISAF's role beyond Kabul. Lang and Milik told us that the current ISAF contingent of roughly 6,000 troops is barely enough to do its mission in Kabul, and that tens of thousands of troops would be needed to do the same job country-wide. They estimated that 80-90% of the people in Kabul strongly supported ISAF, but said that some Al Qaida and Taliban elements are also present, including among the large number of refugees flowing into the capital.

6. (C) Lang told us that there are currently 250 Canadian Forces (CF) personnel in Kabul, and that the deployment of equipment and 1,800 total CF personnel is on track for completion in mid-August. The Canadian Forces are acquiring four low-flying UAVs (the CF's first, prompted by this mission) that they will use to help monitor the neighborhoods of Kabul. These Canadian UAVs are expected to arrive in October, until which time the Germans will keep their UAVs in place.

7. (C) Canada is concerned about ensuring adequate ISAF troop strength in 2004, especially as Germany is eager to reduce its presence. Lang told us that the CF (and most other NATO militaries) do not have the "skill set" needed to run the Kabul airport, and that they would encourage Germany to continue in this role. But another NATO country would have to step up to the plate as a major contributor in 2004, and most likely targets (UK, France, Italy, Spain) have major deployments elsewhere and/or have resisted participating in

ISAF. Lang and Milik expected that senior U.S. officials, such as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, would need to twist arms to find a suitable contributor.

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